

THE SITUATION IN HUNGARY

The recent events in Hungary have caused much concern to many people. They are asking how such things could have come about.

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The suffering and sacrifice of the Hungarian people to preserve their Socialist system has been great and must be seen against the pre war political background of Eastern Europe.

Before the war these countries were fascist or semi fascist with the working class movement hounded and persecuted.

The Horthy fascist dictatorship was established by allied bayonets in 1919, when the flower of the working class was annihilated in the white terror. Hungary was a predominantly peasant country with a strong political church and clergy. The "Times" wrote on August 4th, 1950:

"The Catholic Church enjoyed unique political rights in Hungary which would undoubtedly have been challenged in the mid 20th century no matter what regime was in power.

FASCISTS allied with Hitler

"In fact, the first challenge to the church came while the Communists were a small minority in the first post war coalition Governments. Cardinal Mindszenty and the Bench of Bishops strongly objected to the formal abolition of the monarchy and the setting up of a Republic.

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"They objected to the coalition Government passing any decrees without the approval of the Cardinal. Throughout the centuries the Cardinal has held political powers scarcely inferior to the King....."

Before the war the working class movements in Hungary and Poland were not strong enough to overcome by their own means the fascist regimes of Horthy and Pilsudski despite their heroic struggle.

Their social liberation arose out of the war and the struggle against German fascism and its allies and the advance of the Soviet army.

Hungarian fascism and reaction allied itself with Hitler fascism right to the bitter end.

While many Hungarians played a courageous role in the anti fascist resistance movement during the war, it was above all at the hands of the Soviet army that Horthy fascism suffered its defeat. But reaction, defeated externally, remained strong internally after liberation. Even when peoples' power came into the hands of the working people and Peoples' Democracy was established reaction was by no means defeated nor its influence ended.

ADVANCES -- problems unsolved

Hungarian Peoples Democracy still faced the difficult task of step by step overcoming reaction -- breaking its influence on the working people -- carrying through reconstruction, the mechanisation of agriculture and industrialisation, and winning the people for the advance to socialism.

It was a development - social, political and industrial - which had to be pressed forward with all the problems which that involved.

The Hungarian Communist Party at the time of liberation was very small indeed. The process of amalgamation with the social Democrats took place; the fight against reaction was started, but the creation of a new state system had to go on and industrialisation proceed, and all this had to be compressed into the short period of a single decade.

The process of industrialisation had always been a hard and painful one.

These problems would have been difficult enough to overcome if there had been no abuses and mistakes.

But as we know, the system of lack of party democracy, personal lead

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violations of socialist law and police excesses and crimes, exposed at the Soviet twentieth Congress deeply penetrated the Peoples Democracies in Eastern Europe as well as the Soviet Union, so that while big successes and fundamental socialist gains were achieved, there were also acute problems and discontent among masses of the people which the Hungarian Party was not handling and solving quickly enough.

In this situation the rectification of the mistakes revealed by the Twentieth Congress provided the biggest opportunity for reaction, which played on the just demands of the people.

One of our mistakes, for which we should criticise ourselves has been that in publicising these achievements we did not sufficiently make clear that the path to socialism in these countries was a long process and by no means completed, in which step by step, reaction had to be defeated and the people won for the advance to Socialism.

In our desire to expose the slanders of the capitalist press and publicise the achievements of Socialism, we tended to present too rosy and uncritical a picture of development.

REACTION seized opportunities

Bold initiative was taken after the Soviet Twentieth Congress to restore the State and party relations regarding the damage which had been done to Yugoslavia.

Not the same speed or thought had been applied to the question of the proper forms of relations between the U.S.S.R. and the Peoples Democracies.

In general, the politically autocratic attitude behind the cult of the individual led to the mistakes pointed out in the self-critical Soviet Government statement on the relations between the socialist states - a statement since endorsed by the Chinese Communist party.

Now there was a problem of the process of rectification of mistakes, and it was obvious therefore that in solving the problem of overcoming the abuses of socialism, opportunities would open up for reaction.

The crux of the problem has been the cohesion, unity and organisation of the party in carrying out the necessary steps of democratic economic and social development after the Twentieth Congress.

In Poland all kinds of demands were made by the workers, the students and professional people, summed up under the slogan of "Democratisation".

POLAND Communists united

The Seventh Plenum of the Polish Party took place in July and took the step of deciding on a line of systematic improvement of living standards and socialist democratisation. At the same time the Plenum paid tribute to the great achievements of the Polish Six Year Plan.

A further decisive step was the thrashing out of policy at the Eighth Plenum.

On this basis we have to consider the appointment of Comrade Gomulka while there were still political differences in the party, the party maintained its essential unity before the masses.

The Resolution of the Eighth Plenum stated that the Party must place itself at the head of the working class and all the leading socialist forces of the nation in the process of overcoming the survival, errors and distortions of the past period in order to continue this process to the end, regardless of the inevitable transitory difficulties and hesitations against the manoeuvres of the Reactionary forces.

It is only on this condition, it said, that false liberal bourgeois and vacillating elements should be overcome.

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It is only on this condition that the forces of reaction, which were increasing their activities could be isolated and rendered harmless.

The resolution stated:-

"The unity and cohesion of the party ranks are the foundation stone of the strength of the party, a condition of its effective work."

Important decisions were taken regarding economic, social and democratic reform. At the same time there was no illusion about the menace of reaction.

The resolution declared:-

"The main front of the struggle in the electoral campaign will be run between the forces of socialism rallied under the leadership of our party, on the one hand and the forces of reaction on the other: forces which will undoubtedly attempt to take advantage of the difficulties of the political situation of the country as well as the economic difficulties, to conduct a campaign directed against our party, to weaken the unity of the national front and to utilise the still not overcome moods of embitterment and mistrust among a section of the working people for anti socialist agitation.

"Freedom may serve in our country only the working people - the builders of a new socialist system. There can be no freedom for the enemies of socialism and of the peoples power."

DISCONTENT remedy too slow

In arriving at the decisions of the Eighth Plenum certain problems arose between the Polish Party and the Soviet Communist Party. These problems were resolved as a result of frank discussion and in a party fashion.

The Polish Soviet Alliance has been maintained and the Polish Party is firmly resolved to strengthen relations on the basis of equality and friendship. We wish them well in their great task and the problems before them.

Events in Hungary however, have gone differently, and it is this which is causing our party and the labour movement distress and concern.

The real problem appears to us to have been that the initial rectification of mistakes was not sweeping enough and was too slow; the movement got out of control of the leadership of the party and the working class, and party order and unity collapsed at a decisive moment.

We can understand the background, of which I have already spoken: industrialisation, the peasant problem, the deeply rooted reaction and its connection with the American secret service; a Party which was big in numbers but lacking trained ideologically strong cadres; a Government and a Party not working collectively; and the excesses and crimes which were alien to Socialism.

RIGHT WING plot well laid

The difficult political problem involved in the change is therefore clear -- but the change had to be decisive and the party had to lead.

It will be for the Hungarian Communists fully to analyse the events, but it would appear to us that an internal party battle went on without sufficient thought to what was happening outside, which gave the supreme opportunity for Hungarian reaction which, together with U.S. imperialism, had been preparing for years.

And if there had been one utilisation of slogans of democracy for anti-socialism and anti Sovietism in Poland, as the comrades point out, how much more did it happen in Hungary in that particular situation!

Behind the just demands of the people all kinds of forces were organising and arming.

Lord Barber, of the Daily Mail, boasted that he had dined with the very man who 'for a year plotted this week's revolt'. There was a Hungarian on

Television last week who made the same statement, and similar statements have been published in the press generally.

Therefore there were the two trends in the situation: The just demands of the people on which steps were being taken, too slowly; and the forces of reaction determined to use the situation for an all out effort to break socialist power.

And it is not only we who are saying that. Every responsible Communist Party in the world was saying that. It was said by the Polish comrades. It was said by Tito and "Borba", the Yugoslav official paper. It has been said in the Chinese statement.

And not only Communists. Even a Social Democrat like Anna Kethly, only recently released from jail and asked to join the Nagy Government, said to Basil Davidson of the "Daily Herald":-

"Among the revolutionaries there are right wing fascist extremists who dearly love to capture our national revolution so as to impose another kind of dictatorship."

SOVIET TROOPS memories are short

But one thing is clear: That no worker who took part in the rising wanted to go back to 1938 -- and why?

Because whatever the excesses and abuses in Hungary, it was a workers and peasants state. It gave the land to peasants: It brought social advances and power was taken out of the hands of the feudal landlord and exploiters of the masses. Whatever mistakes were made, they could have been put right, given proper political handling.

It is equally clear that the role of counter revolution was not that of clearing up the excesses, nor was its aim Hungarian national independence -- but the restoration of capitalism and landlordism and the destruction of the People's power as such.

From the first they seized the Western frontier with Austria. It was from there that more emigre forces crossed over; the Gyor Radio became their political instrument in making their demands. Nagy, as Prime Minister, increasingly retreated before reaction.

The security police were dissolved; the promise of the so-called "free elections" was made; the revival of the old parties including capitalist parties, took place; the demand for Soviet withdrawal from the whole of Hungary was made; the matter was raised with the United Nations; the proposal for a neutral Hungary under four power control was put forward.

Even this did not satisfy the counter revolutionary forces who called for full Western intervention and political and material help from the West. While all this was going on reports were published of what can only be described as white terror against the working class forces.

It is in the light of all these things that the question of the Soviet troops has to be judged. The Hungarian authorities called them in on the first occasion. Nobody questions that, while Nagy might deny he was responsible. It is a tragedy that they had to be involved, because it placed them in the most difficult position. They certainly did not wish to protect anything wrong in the Hungarian situation.

Memories are too short. We must recall the suffering and agony caused because Hitler and fascism came into power. There is a tendency to forget how the Warsaw powers came into existence and why Soviet troops were stationed in these countries.

It was a collective defence answer of the Socialist states to the North Atlantic Treaty, to the plans of imperialist forces in Western Europe, and especially American organisation, and we must not forget the U.S.A. to "liberate"

Eastern Europe.

CONCESSIONS demands increased

Above all, it was an answer to Adenauer and the new regular German army with atomic weapons, and he has made no bones about his aims of revision of frontiers of Eastern Europe, especially Poland.

The Soviet Government made clear that if the Warsaw Treaty signatories want withdrawal of troops from Hungary then it will take place; but it is for them finally to decide.

As soon as the Nagy Government requested withdrawal from Budapest, the troops were withdrawn. It would have appeared then that a democratic socialist solution was still possible and that counter revolution could be overcome.

But in every step Nagy took, reaction increased its demands. As the "Times" put in its Editorial:-

"Many of the insurgents, feeling their power demanded more".

All the conditions were being prepared for a Western intervention, the elimination of Socialism and the virtual white terror reminiscent of 1919, wiping out the flower of Hungary's working class movement.

The Nagy Government was in fact disintegrating. The counter revolutionary elements had taken over the Foreign Office. Writing in Reynolds on Sunday 4th Nov, Alexander Werth referred to the seizure by the revolutionaries of the Foreign Ministry in Budapest. He wrote:-

"Imre Nagy, the Premier, is also Foreign Minister, and the 'revolutionaries' are Hungarian right wing extremists, under the leadership of Joseph Dudas, who do not recognise the authority of the Nagy Government."

Through the Foreign Office the counter revolutionaries were in fact presenting their case to the world. The Mindszenty broadcast on Saturday evening was the virtual signal for the counter revolutionary coup.

It can be summed up in four points: out with the Nagy Government - this having served its purpose of the facade behind which counter revolution was preparing its forces for the final effort; the restoration of capitalism; the land to be taken from the peasants and the workshops from the working class; the restoration of the economic and political power of the Church; and direct Western intervention.

It was a decisive class challenge, and to this the Hungarian working class responded;

Kadar and the best elements of the Hungarian Working Peoples Party broke with Nagy on 1st November to form a new Government, and places have been left open in the Government for other democratic representatives. This Government declared:-

"The excesses of the counter revolution must be stopped. The hour of action has come,

CLASS ISSUE for us too

"Defend the power of the workers and peasants, the gains of peoples democracy; let us establish order, security and calm in our country".

Its programme is one of Socialism, democracy and peace.

But the question of a bastion of fascism in Hungary is a class issue not only for the Hungarian working class.

It would have represented a decisive change in the balance of forces in

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Central Europe, menacing not only the U.S.S.R., but Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and every Peoples Democracy, menacing the peace of the world.

It would have been an encouragement to Adenauer and every adventurer, and would have gravely increased the danger of war. These were the dangers which the Soviet Government had to take into account when it made the difficult decision to respond to the appeal of the Kadar Government for help against counter revolutionaries.

This is how we have seen this decisive action. There was no alternative in this situation, however much one would have wished that the counter revolutionary forces could have been dealt with differently.

It has been decisive from two angles: From the class angle of fascism or Socialism; working class advance or counter revolution. It has been decisive also from the point of view of peace. The issue was whether there should be a spearhead of reaction in Eastern Europe, a new hot bed of war preparation, with probable American bases under militant fascism; or a socialist state devoted to the cause of peace.

This has been the issue facing everyone: The Hungarian working class, the Soviet Union, and the British working class too.

Should we support a tactic which in fact would be support for the restoration of Hungarian fascism, or should we support those acting in the best interests of the Hungarian people?

INDEPENDENCE not through reaction

We stand by the latter. It is a stand which has been supported by every major Communist Party throughout the world.

Some would argue: Better risk the danger of fascism than the danger of war. The answer to that is: It was not a risk of fascism -- it was the certainty of fascism, unless the Hungarian workers fought, arms in hand, had a Government capable of defeating counter revolution and receiving the help of the Soviet Union.

The success of counter revolution could have sparked off similar forces elsewhere in Eastern Europe, for which the West, and particularly the American secret service, has been preparing for and spending its money on for years.

Whereas to preserve Central Europe in the hands of the Socialist forces is the best guarantee for peace, both in the present and in the future.

The rise of fascism in 1933 meant war in 1939. It must not be allowed to rise again if peace is ever to be secure.

Some people ask whether this is not an interference with self determination. It was a struggle within Hungary to determine what forces were capable of making Hungary free; in these last days the forces of counter revolution with its external help from capitalism, were arrayed against the forces of the working class and socialism.

Had counter revolution won there would not have been an independent Hungary able to determine its future, but a dependent, subservient Hungary-- a pawn of the West.

SOCIALISM not imposed

Socialist Hungary will determine its own destiny and forms of democratic development. As far as the Soviet Union is concerned negotiations will start with all Warsaw Pact powers regarding defence arrangements and everything connected with the disposition of Soviet troops.

Some say you cannot have Socialism imposed by force from the outside. This is true. But this was not and is not the issue in Hungary. It was the Hungarian

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workers who were building Socialism in Hungary. Its further development is the task and responsibility of the Hungarian people.

It was a case of counter revolution subsidised and inspired from the outside trying to destroy Socialism by force.

This is what every worker has got to understand, and that is why we believe that the entire labour movement should stand by the Hungarian workers Government in this difficult hour, and support the efforts it is making, with the help of the Soviet Union, to prevent the restoration of fascism in Hungary.